

Bell (John)  
AN

## ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT NASHVILLE, T. OCTOBER 3TH, 1830,

BEING THE

**First Anniversary**

OF THE

**ALUMNI SOCIETY**

OF THE

**UNIVERSITY OF NASHVILLE.**

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**BY JOHN BELL, ESQ.**

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## ADDRESS.

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THE *Alumni Society* of the University have selected me to deliver their first Anniversary Discourse. For the distinction thus conferred upon me, I am grateful, and can attribute it to no other merit in myself, than my supposed zeal in the cause of Education. I will say so much in my own commendation, as upon this ground to approve their choice, while, upon every other, I could have wished, that it had fallen upon some one more capable of answering their own and the public expectation.

It is usual, I believe, upon such occasions, to select a subject admitting of such illustrations of classic allusion and fancy, as would best serve to exhibit the speaker to advantage, and to win the applause of an audience—one, more for pleasing declamation, than profitable discussion. The novelty, in this country at least, of occasions like the present, and the peculiar condition and circumstances of the Institution, which the gentlemen of the Society are proud to acknowledge as their common mother in Letters and Science, will, I hope, justify me in a slight departure from the course sanctioned by the practice of others. I might find an apology for straying from the beaten track, in the object and wishes of the society itself—a society instituted for the purpose of promoting general education in Tennessee, but, more especially, to sustain the University against the assaults of prejudice, and the chilling and no less fatal influence of neglect. Before we can wisely indulge ourselves in fanciful representations of the charms of literature, and felicitate each other upon the possession of great mental cultivation; before we can safely revel in the luxuries of learning in this country, the hard, dry task must be performed of laying the foundation, in a solid manner, for the sober enjoyment of a degree of knowledge essential to the continuation of social order, and the preservation of our free and happy institutions. I shall be excused, then, if,

instead of holding up to your view a gilded and imaginary drawing of excellencies attained, I present the rude and fearful spectre of arts unduly prized, learning generally unappreciated, and every effort to excite a thirst for science, and a taste for general improvement, paralyzed by the cold indifference of the better informed, and by popular jealousy and suspicion. Under such circumstances, I could have no soul for display, if I possessed the art. I come to the discharge of the duty assigned me to day, with a heart depressed by a vision of the future, but, I trust, not dismayed. It is, indeed, no time for mutual congratulations. It can be of no use to conceal from the public, that some of the friends of the University have already despaired. By the most surprising exertions of a few individuals, Cumberland College had new life breathed into it. It rose in name, with all the essential attributes, to the rank of University, having every advantage to conciliate public favor, and every claim upon its patronage. But even now, when it is about to send forth to the world its annual tribute of generous, well-educated youth, trained to admire and emulate the actions of the most illustrious benefactors of mankind, it has been made a question whether prudence does not require that its operations should cease. Thanks to the determined spirit of those who have the immediate direction of it, it is decreed, that every resource shall be first exhausted; and if it must fall, that it shall bring with it a shock upon the community, like that which attends the extinguishment of hope! But still the thought intrudes, that this infant, and, I will say, noble institution, which has already done much to awaken a spirit of improvement, may be destined, in a few years, to afford another pretext to those revilers of our character, who charge, that we are mere adventurers here in pursuit of sordid gain—content with physical eminence and coarse enjoyment, fit only to be the mere guards, for the protection of our more refined and civilized neighbors; with strength enough to conquer in fight, but possessing too little knowledge and cultivation to aspire to an equal participation in the weighty affairs of national policy and control. That such opinions of our character prevail abroad,



every traveller beyond our own confines knows to be true. Our best farmers are said to be destitute of the elements of science, living in plenty, but without any wish for the comforts and advantages of cultivated society; that our merchants are mere cent-per-cent scholars, knowing no use of money but to make more out of it, or to expend it in costly ornaments without taste; that our physicians are quacks in medicine; our lawyers pettifoggers, and our clergymen mere enthusiasts, except such individuals of these respective classes, as have been graciously supplied from the intellectual redundancy of our sister states. It would seem to be no very uncommon sentiment in other states, that our countrymen, generally, are so sunk in ignorance of every thing but the common arts of procuring a homely subsistence, so incompetent to decide for themselves upon the ordinary questions of party politics, as to be the ready tools of the little talent amongst us; willing to follow or be transferred by our political leaders like so many slaves. I regard these aspersions of our character as little as any man, but while my bosom swells with indignation at the injustice, I confess, I am humbled and mortified when I discover so little of the true spirit of honorable competition for distinction among our sister states, in all that relates to education and intellectual advancement. How long shall the public abroad be incredulous to the fact that Tennessee can have produced, in her own bosom, any thing of genius, science, liberal accomplishments, or even of professional skill? That gross injustice is done to us in this, and many other respects, is undoubtedly owing chiefly to prejudice, and an ignorance of our actual condition on the part of those who entertain such opinions; but it becomes us well to reflect, what encouragement we afford to such misrepresentations, by our own conduct; by our neglect of all public institutions for the improvement of our population in general knowledge.

That we are in the rear of many of the sister states, even of the West, in the number and respectability of institutions for public instruction, is but too true; that as a consequence of this dearth of the means, Science is at a low ebb, cannot be denied; and that the intellectual degrada-

tion affirmed of us, actually threatens the rising generation, is a melancholy fact. But despair would be treason to our own interests. Nor should we be taught to think meanly of ourselves. It is not my purpose to become our own apologist. Those who disparage us, however, might recollect, that there are many obstacles in all newly planted societies, which must be first overcome, before there can be either time, or means, or even a taste for mental cultivation. In this country, these obstacles to science were of a peculiar and most distressing nature. Unlike the tide of emigration to the new states in our day, flowing along in broad highways, in peace and security, bearing with it the preacher, the teacher, wealth, and all the apparatus of a perfect state of society—the early settlers of this country came in the midst of war. They led their scanty packs along by-paths beset with the painted savage; the axe and firelock their only reliance for subsistence and defence. I appeal then to the liberal of every country, if it is matter of just accusation against us, that the gentle arts of life, affrighted at the boldness of the enterprize, should linger long in the rear. The minds of every new people, like the lands they occupy, are in a forest state. The incumbrances of both must be cleared away before the fruits and flowers of mature society spring up under the hand of the cultivator, physical or moral. Fields, the dwelling, the farm-house and the shop, precede the temples of science and the more costly monuments of art. But have we not long since passed this incipient stage of society? Our fathers have entered here, expelled the savage and felled the forest. In every part of the country the comfortable, and even splendid mansion decorates its face. Everywhere, spreading fields, fruitful in corn, and whitening with the richest staple in the world, greet the eye and mark the progress of agricultural improvement. Is it not time, that the moral endowments of our nature should receive their appropriate culture? Have we not already failed in the great duty of providing the staff of mental life to our children? Let our neglected colleges and academies—let our absolute destitution of public elementary schools, speak. That a few individuals



have dedicated their minds and much of their valuable time to the cause of education, to their honor, be it admitted; but that the tide of popular sentiment has been setting strong against them, each of them knows but too well. For my own part, if I supposed that the sentence, which the public voice appears to have pronounced upon this subject, was irrevocable, I would now sit down in despair, not of the cause of education, not of Alma Mater, but of my country, of liberty! But I feel no such sentiment of despondency myself, and my advice to others would be, cheer up. If the tide is against us, let us breast it manfully. Let us roll back the wave of public opinion, as we can, as we must. If it be true, that knowledge, generally diffused among the people, is the only sure foundation of a republic, (and who is he, in what school of morals or politics educated, that will deny it?) surely there is reason enough in the community to enable them, in time, and before it is too late, to lay hold of this pillar of their safety; to guard, in security, this ark of their political covenant. The population of this country, I speak it not in flattery, is formed of as good materials; is as rich in native understanding, as zealous of good government, and as determined to preserve the inheritance of freedom to their children, as any people on this globe. Nor are they more pre-disposed to err, or more obstinate in their prejudices, than others.

How, then, with such a population, shall we account for the almost total neglect of education which has heretofore so fearfully marked our progress? Let us first boldly probe the matter to the bottom, and then apply the remedy, however painful it may be to the feelings of any of us. Let us inquire how it has happened, that the higher seminaries of learning in our state have been absolutely proscribed, and that the magnificent promises of our politicians in behalf of common schools have resulted in such puny performances; that during a period of more than twenty years, which has elapsed since many colleges and academies were established, having lost the countenance of their natural guardians, with their funds wasted or exhausted, they have been compelled to drag on a doubtful

existence—yet, in all that time, no champion of their claims has made his appearance in our legislative halls, with talents and perseverance enough to make himself heard throughout the community. How has it fallen out, that a cause, which, in most of the sister states, has commanded the first talents, and added new honors to names already illustrious, has not found favor with a single liberal and enlightened member of our own legislature, although that body has, at no time, been destitute of able and patriotic members? Causes the most rational, I am persuaded, may be assigned for this extraordinary apathy, or rather opposition to the cause of education in this country. The details of them would be tedious and useless, nor would I, upon this occasion, venture upon the unpleasant task of a summary notice of them, if, in our attempt to counteract them, it were not of importance that they should be more generally understood.

In settling the terms upon which the state was authorized to appropriate the vacant lands within its limits, the General Government, in a spirit of parental solicitude for the welfare of the young and growing population of Tennessee, made it a condition, that one hundred thousand acres should be laid off for the support of a college in East, and of one in West Tennessee; and a like quantity for the support of academies. These lands were required by Congress, to be sold at a price of not less than two dollars per acre; thus contemplating an endowment of one hundred thousand dollars for each college, and twice that sum for academies; a provision sufficiently ample for the higher seminaries of the state. But, unfortunately, when the legislature proceeded to execute this provision of the compact, it was found that there were no sufficient bodies of land, open to appropriation upon the terms prescribed. There was, however, a large tract of country south of French Broad and Holston rivers, the inhabitants of which, by the same compact with the government, were to receive a title to the lands they occupied, upon the payment of one dollar per acre, and upon these lands, as the only resort at that time, the college and academy claims were located. Thus, at the outset, were those institutions



shorn of half the resources originally provided for them. Had this diminished fund been faithfully collected and applied, it would still have been a respectable, though inadequate, endowment. But before we censure, with too much severity, the almost total abstraction of it from its destined beneficent uses, it should be remembered, that many of the inhabitants of that part of the country had settled and improved their lands at the imminent peril of their lives; and if honor and gratitude be due to the first adventurers in a new and hostile country, they were among the most meritorious of our population; deserving our gratitude for their daring-enterprize in opening the way to a new and fertile region, and our sympathy for their sufferings. We should then be slow to impugn the conduct of the legislature in giving an extended credit upon the sales of those lands, in the first place, and in remitting the interest in arrear, and giving still further time upon the principal again and again, while the sources of wealth were almost dried up, in a long period which preceded the late war; and finally, in being induced by the long habit of indulgence and the small means of many of the settlers, to release a large portion of the principal debt, and in failing to make any adequate provision for the collection of the remainder. All this I can easily pardon to the good feeling which may have operated upon the legislature. And I could look without regret upon the abstraction of a few hundred thousands from the sacred treasury of science, if no other and worse consequences had followed. The privation might have been temporary and the sacrilege stripped of half its enormity, but for the fatal prejudices against education generally, and the habit of regarding slightly the obligations of good faith, which grew up in the country, with the progress of indulgence to the debtors of the colleges and academies. As the relief sought by that portion of our fellow citizens, could not be expected without opposition, it became, naturally and inevitably, the leading and almost exclusive political interest of a whole region. Whenever a question comes to be, whether a man shall have a freehold for little or nothing, or be charged for it a price his means cannot bear, according to his

own estimate of them; when such a question becomes common to a whole section of country, and individual responsibility is weakened or lost by its diffusion among many, the means of obtaining a favorable decision will never be too nicely scanned by the rules of morality and justice. A people thus situated will easily persuade themselves that reason and equity are on their side, whatever public interests may be wounded by their success. I know of no moral or religious check of sufficient potency to prevent such a result. We need not, therefore, be surprised, that the representatives of the occupants south of the French Broad and Holston, should become the "Swiss Corps" of the legislature, united and absorbed in a single interest, and prepared to make all others merely auxiliary and subordinate to it. Whoever has had any experience in legislation knows the extent of the resources of a minority, in effecting any single measure, to which they are willing to sacrifice all others. Every election, from a clerk to a senator in Congress; and every other question of local interest or policy, of which we have always had a great number, are laid hold of with unerring tact, as a means of adding strength to each separate interest, until a majority of the whole body find themselves seduced, by some motive or other, into the support of measures, which, if left to be decided upon their individual merits, could never have received their concurrence. But what is chiefly to be regretted, is, that measures carried in this way, so far from being decided upon principles of public good, are generally succeeded in, by disparaging and trampling under foot the most sacred rights and interests, public and private. So, in this case it has happened, that not only the debtors of the colleges and academies, but the inhabitants of every other section of the country, who, without any of their merit, have put forward similar claims to preferences and low prices as occupants of the public lands, have had a common interest with them, in decrying the higher seminaries of learning in the state. Without, as well as within the legislative hall, they have been the standing and zealous declaimers against colleges and academies. All such institutions



have been denounced as unworthy of public patronage; as belonging to the rich, the aristocracy of the land; and in which the people have no other interest, than to pull them down. The representatives of those sections, which have never been biased by occupant rights, but who were drawn into the support of them by the influences I have already described, have been compelled, in self-defence, to join in the clamor against institutions they had first reduced to poverty by their votes. Thus, the public sentiment of the whole state has become tainted, and in many counties, the higher seminaries of learning have come to be regarded not only with disfavor, but with positive odium. Still we must not undervalue the good sense of our countrymen. In the contest between the colleges and academies, and the inhabitants south of French Broad and Holston, the very principle upon which the country was settled, was in some sort assailed, and our adversaries had the advantage of topics and arguments, which went directly to the hearts of a great and respectable portion of the people. I remember perfectly well how I was affected, when a student of the college, by the simple and impressive appeal of one of the ablest advocates for the relief of these occupants. He first described the security, the plenty, and the riches which abounded in the neighborhood of the colleges. Then he went into the usual invective against the wealthy, or what he termed the aristocracy of the country, with their sons wallowing in luxury, and learning to say, *hic, hæc, hoc*, in a college. With this part of his speech I was unmoved, because I stood a present witness, that what he said was a gross libel on the college to which I belonged, for I was no bantling of the wealthy; but when he came to describe, in a manner I cannot imitate, the early settler, now in his old age, compelled once more to seek a habitation still further in the wilderness; to leave his fields and cabins endeared to him by so many recollections of early peril, and which he had already paid for, but too dearly, in the blood of his children; and this too, that colleges and academies might be reared in the midst of his more fortunate and wealthy countrymen, I confess I was affected. The question made between a

people, thus contending for their firesides, with so many claims upon public sympathy, and the colleges and academies, could not be otherwise than unfortunate and disastrous, in its issue, to the cause of education. I do believe, that the opposition to colleges and academies originating with the occupants south of French Broad and Holston, would have been felt and persevered in, with the use of the same means, and perhaps as successfully, by any other people, who might have been exposed to similar temptations of feeling and interest.

There is one cause of opposition to the higher institutions of learning in the state, which, I fear, is destined to operate, long after that I have just noticed, shall have been overcome and forgotten. I allude to those sectional jealousies which exist in every state, but which the geographical figure of Tennessee threatens to make a perpetual bar to every scheme of improvement. The inhabitants of the Western District consider themselves so separated from the rest of the state, by distance and natural boundaries, as to require a college or university of their own, and, therefore, they regard those already established as foreign to them. The inhabitants of East and Middle Tennessee, are naturally jealous of the prosperity and influence of Knoxville and Nashville, the sites of the two principal literary institutions in the state, and therefore do not feel themselves called upon to increase their importance, by patronizing the seats of learning in their neighborhood. Such jealousies are founded in passions of the human heart which are universal and in their general operation have a salutary tendency in every free community. No friend of equal legislation in Tennessee ought to desire all the commercial capital, all the talents and skill in the arts, to be concentrated upon a single point; and such a result, the physical features of the state will forever defeat. But, there appears to be no rational foundation for the jealousy that exists against the sites of literary institutions. The learning acquired at colleges is not local. It distributes itself, and seeks a theatre for its usefulness, in every quarter of the country. There can be no monopoly of science in any town or city. The ex-



perience of the United States has shown, that not more than one or two literary institutions, of a high grade, can be maintained in any one state; and if the people of this country would avail themselves of the advantages of a home education for their youth, the different sections must compromise their interests, and yield all local feelings to the general good. Without such a spirit of concord, and reciprocal sacrifices of wants and wishes, no great, no noble design can ever be accomplished for the benefit of the country.

The natural effect of the hue and cry excited against colleges and academies by the causes I have pointed out, has been, to beget, among the leading politicians of the country, a general spirit of timidity, and a distrust of the support of the people, in relation to every measure connected with the subject of education. I cannot, upon any other hypothesis, account for the fact, that when the Hiwassee lands became subject to appropriation, and thus put it in the power of the legislature to redeem the character of the state from the charge of hostility to science, by remunerating the colleges and academies for the losses they had sustained by the violation of a public trust, yet no member had the moral courage to make the proposition. I can, upon no other principle, account for the fact, that although, for many years past, an ample pecuniary fund has been at the disposal of the legislature, and still continues within its control, yet this stain upon the character of the state still remains to be blotted out. I mean no censure upon individuals. I personally know several gentlemen of the legislature of the most correct and patriotic views upon this and every other subject, but who believe that their public usefulness would be destroyed by proposing to do justice to the colleges and academies. But surely the people mean to do right, and may yet be awakened to a sense of what is due to their character, whatever prejudices may exist against literary institutions. To preserve the public faith; to uphold the democratic principle that the people, by their representatives, are the safe and competent trustees of whatever interests, public or private, may be committed to their guardianship, all sectional jealousies, all

general prejudices should give way. We are in the habit, of late, of arraigning, with some severity, the proceedings of congress. We do not hesitate to charge the members of that body with usurpation of power, with a violation of public trust, in squandering the general treasure, in bribes to particular sections, or in corrupting their constituents by distributing among them the public funds. This I do not object to; but it becomes us to look at home, and to ponder long and seriously the tendency of examples to be found in our own legislation. I will not enumerate them. I would rather cast the veil of eternal oblivion over them; but it should sink deep into the mind of every true friend of his country, that no temporary expediency, no short-lived applause of the people, can justify a legislative body in disregarding those rules of honor, propriety and justice in the discharge of a public trust, which individuals are bound by. The good that is obtained, is generally fleeting, and can never weigh in the balance against public credit impaired, public confidence destroyed.

I have thus, with a free hand, unveiled the causes of the low state of science in this state. I have proclaimed the mischief. It remains to point out the remedy, and to invoke, by the highest considerations we can bring to our aid, the co-operation of all, in the application of it.

First, it is proper to have a just view of the ultimate object of our efforts in the cause of education. I lay it down, that the object of all human science, is the happiness of the human family. No project of human invention has any just claim to our attention, which has not the general good for its basis. It would be doing gross injustice to the views of the society assembled here to day, to suppose that its members seek to rear a university merely, and without any proper conception of the greater and more noble purposes to be accomplished by it. It is no essential part of their plan, to build up and sustain such an institution at *Nashville*; to make *this* the exclusive seat of learning in the state, or to afford to the citizens of this place and its vicinity, facilities for the education of their youth, which can no where else be found;



nor is it a legitimate or rational purpose of a public literary institution, wheresoever situated, to qualify the youth who may receive instruction at it to seek their own personal consequence in the community, or to advance their individual fortunes. A purpose so narrow and selfish will be disclaimed by the loftier feelings, the more expanded views, which science itself inspires. The patriotic statesman, the enlightened patron of letters, would scorn to devote his time to the attainment of an end so ignoble and unworthy of his regard. A public institution, set on foot with views so limited and mercenary, would justly call down upon it the hostility of a free community. But far other and higher are the motives of the founders of this institution, and of those who have associated themselves for its support. In vain will the Alumni of the University have held "high converse" with the illustrious philosophers and patriots of antiquity for so many years; in vain will they have explored the secret recesses of science, and hoarded up its treasures with so much mental toil, if they shall not have imbibed the pure and elevated sentiment, that all their acquisitions are held in trust for the benefit of the whole society in which they live; if they shall not have learned, that the maximum attainment of all moral science is, to have a head to understand and a heart free to discharge, at any sacrifice, every social duty. The friends of education in Tennessee, must extend their views to the limits of the whole state, and embrace every member of our free community. Public favor can only be won by the merit of our designs. To be successful, we must deserve to be so; and as the public good may continue to be our aim, so shall our hopes be crowned. This, then, is the remedy. Let the people see and feel that the University is their own, as it is. In a popular government, no chartered privileges should be held, but for the public good; and if the higher seminaries of learning cannot be supported upon this principle, they are at war with the genius of our government, and deserve to be pulled down. Let their claims be brought to this test, and I fear not the result. If the only effect of such institutions shall be, to send forth upon the community an annual batch of young

men, fitted by the narrow principles they shall have imbibed, to run the petty, jostling and selfish career of personal ambition, now too common in the country, I will be the first to imprecate the veto of the people upon their existence. If their tendency shall be to nourish a purer patriotism, a loftier ambition, seeking its gratification in the applause which follows an upright, firm and able discharge of all the duties which the citizens of a free country may be called upon to perform, they will deserve to be sustained. Let the Alumni of the University, then, devote themselves to their country; let them become the able and disinterested champions of the public interests, to the utter discomfiture of all selfish and sinister purposes. If a college or university shall turn out but one determined and gifted advocate of the real interests of the country, a year, the people will not long remain blind to the good it will have done. If it shall turn out but one scholar, in five or ten years, who shall, by his genius, science or eminent success in any of the arts, illustrate the character of his state, lead his countrymen into new paths of innocent pleasure, or open new sources of wealth and comfort, it will not have existed in vain. These are some of the means of combatting public prejudices. But they require time for a full development of effect. We have other and more powerful weapons in our hands, if we will but wield them with a proper zeal and energy. We can address ourselves directly to the self-interest of every portion of our free population. It is by the sciences taught only in the higher seminaries of learning, that the secret and unexplored treasures of our hitherto unproductive hills and mountains, are to be brought to light; that the yet untried capacities and adaptations of our various soils are to be more speedily developed, and made to yield new and profitable productions to the agriculturist. It is by the aid of such lights as colleges usually diffuse through the country, that many of the most useful manufactories can be domiciled and perfected among us. It is by the aid of the same means, that roads and canals are destined to give to the interior and secluded sections of the state, all the advantages of a domestic and foreign market, which nature



results, to be anticipated from the establishment of colleges and academies, institutions which have too long been held up to the hatred of our citizens, as intended only for the been fit of the rich. Time will not permit even a summary notice of all. Fancy itself would tire in the enumeration. But I cannot forbear to mark the season as propitious to a general onset of the friends of science against her enemies. The signs are eminently auspicious. The worshippers of Mammon are bringing their offerings to the shrine of science. The hardy mountaineer, and the inhabitants of the sequestered dell, are yielding up their prejudices and acknowledging the value of university learning. Witness the specimens of minerals, almost daily brought, to be tested by the science and skill of the gentleman who fills, with so much distinction, the chair of chemistry and mineralogy in the University. The spirit may become contagious. Would, that our countrymen of every section of the state, might be brought to a knowledge of the truth; to know, that the resources and comforts of every class of society would be multiplied by the due encouragement of colleges and academies. We owe a statue to Gold!

But I have yet in reserve the key which may unlock the door of the affections of the people, which has been so long closed against us. Let the cause of popular education be identified with the higher seminaries of learning. The connection between them is natural and proper in all countries, but more especially in this. It exists already in effect, but the union should be more palpable. It has been proclaimed on the other side of the water, as a mark of the improvement of the age, that "the schoolmaster is abroad" in the land. But what were the secret agents, which have been slowly but steadily preparing the way for him among the benighted and trodden down peasantry of Europe? Their numerous and thronged Universities, and other rich foundations for the spread of science. It is from them, that the copious streams of light and knowledge have flowed so long and unceasingly, as, at last, to have reached the humble laborer at the loom and at the plough. Such has been the resistless current of the same streams, that *there* the power of mind is becoming too strong for

the power of the throne, and the schoolmaster has made his appearance to complete its overthrow. But who is the present schoolmaster of England? He is a scholar, trained and educated in colleges, or other institutions of a high grade. In Europe, too, it was from the nature of the governments which predominated there, that the higher seminaries of learning preceded, at so long an interval, the establishment of public elementary schools. In a republic, it is not only proper that any system of education established by law should be adapted to the wants and tend directly to the melioration of the great body of the people, but from the very structure of such a government, it would be the very extravagance of the brain, to suppose that the people, generally, would submit to taxation for the support of institutions, at which but a small portion of them could expect to educate their sons. In this country, where the power of the people reaches and controls every thing, it is decreed, that common schools and colleges and academies shall rise or fall together, and it is both our duty and our interest, cheerfully to subscribe to the propriety as well as the necessity of their united destiny. It is true, that some among us have maintained the doctrine, that common schools should precede colleges and academies; and some have even affirmed, that the latter were undeserving the support of a republican people. I will not stop to inquire where they expect to get fit teachers for their schools; but light is breaking in even upon them! We hail the dawn of a more congenial day to the cause of education. The Sun of science is risen. He shines dimly and feebly through clouds, it is true, but by his broad disk and steady advance up the eastern summit, we are encouraged to hope, that, at no distant day, we may behold him in his meridian strength, pouring his full, clear and benignant rays upon the whole human family! Those who have opposed the march of science will be confounded. The proofs of their weakness and folly are accumulating in every part of the world. *Here*, they have intrenched themselves behind common schools, and while they have denounced colleges and academies, they have filled the country with vast expectations of what they would do



in behalf of elementary institutions. What they have promised, let the friends of a united system of education for the state perform. Let them go radically to work, digest a system, provide an adequate fund, and never cease their efforts until the schoolmaster shall be actually installed.

In entering upon such an undertaking, it is proper that some plan should be pointed out, which shall unite the greatest advantages to society, and hold out the best prospect of success. In devising any system of popular education, it is of the first importance to have some clear conception of what is practicable. An attempt to do too much, is almost as much to be deprecated as to remain wholly passive. Defeat, in projects too great for our means, or the necessary constitution of society, will inevitably bring the whole subject into disrepute, and retard, if not wholly disappoint, the expectations of the friends of education. To make the standard of education equal; to affirm with some enthusiasts upon this subject, that no system deserves the support of a republican legislature, which does not contemplate, that every child of the republic shall receive the same degree of instruction, is certainly wild and visionary. All cannot become classical scholars, or profound mathematicians; nor is it possible to provide means so ample. And, although under any equal and benignant system of laws and government like our own, there can never be any classification of society into what, in other countries, are called gentry and peasantry, the rich and the poor, yet in every possible form of society or government, there will always be a large portion of its members, who, for the time being, cannot spare their children from the field and the work-shop long enough to acquire such a knowledge of many of the branches of science belonging to an academic course, as would be of the least use to them in after life. Besides, practical husbandry, the first and noblest of the useful arts, and the mechanic trades, can never be so successfully taught, whatever theories may exist to the contrary, as in the field and workshop of the agriculturist and mechanic. In the oldest and most wealthy communities, it is only those pa-

rents, who are able to dispense with the personal services of their children, and also to expend at least some hundreds of their pecuniary means upon their education, who can place them in a course of academic instruction. It is greatly to be desired, that this almost universal necessity and law of every society should be so far broken in upon, as to afford, at the public charge, a finished education to the most apt and promising scholars at the primary schools, whose means may not admit of a further advance in the track to which their young minds aspire. Thus, the young and unknown Newtons Franklins and Fultons of the land would be enabled to burst the veil of obscurity which poverty had drawn over them, and their fine geniuses given a free and unimpeded course to the heights of fame and public usefulness. This much, the country owes not to them, but to itself. But still, all that the laws of any well regulated community can do, for those who are dependent for their support upon their daily labor, is to provide the means of acquiring the elements of all the more useful sciences; to place them upon an equal footing, in point of dignity and privileges as citizens, with their more wealthy neighbors, and to hold out the assurance, that themselves or their children may, one day, be ranked with the rich of the land, if that be an desirable distinction, while, perhaps, the children of the present capitalist and lordly owner of the wide domain may, in their turn, have to grapple with poverty and reascend the eminence of wealth, by the same slow and toilsome steps which their forefathers trod. Nothing is more certain than that the working classes of the present generation will furnish the idle, luxurious and rich of the next; and that the children of the present rich must constitute a part of the working classes of the succeeding age. Let the poor of the present day cease a moment from their toils and take courage from a thousand examples around them. In all this wide and smiling land, how few are the fortunes, which have not been built up by the industry of their present possessors; and who are they, who are most honored and respected, whether in or out of office, for their virtues and abilities, as scholars, artists, patriots or statesmen in every part of the Union?



Generally, the once obscure, or the sons of the poor and obscure, or of those who have risen, by their daily toil, to the enjoyment of an honest, though moderate independence. But still the standard of education for common schools, should be so high as not only to engraft the elements of the most useful learning in the minds of the scholars, but to give them such a thirst for knowledge, such a glimpse of the sublime truths of science, as to insure in after life the application of a due portion of the intervals of toil to reading and inquiry. To accomplish more than this, would be impossible; but to this point, the ease with which subsistence can be procured, the fertility of our soil and the healthfulness of our climate demonstrate, we can go. The foundations will then be deeply laid, of such a degree of intelligence; such a spirit of inquiry; such an exercise of mind among the great body of the people, as become the citizens of a free country; while a portion of their numbers at the higher institutions, may push their researches into the profound depths of philosophy, bringing honor to themselves and advantage to their country, by the extent of their discoveries and the splendor of their attainments.

We have, yet, to point out the means of effecting this great purpose. We have a population of near half a million of free inhabitants, in a territory of about 40,000 square miles. If a primary school shall be established in every three or four miles square, in the inhabited parts of the state, there will be between three and four thousand schools to be maintained. To raise up a corps of adequate teachers, a market must be created for them, like every thing else of value, by paying liberal prices. An expenditure of less than \$100,000 or \$120,000 per annum, when all the schools shall be organized, would seem to me absolutely delusive and useless. If it should be raised to \$150,000 or even \$200,000, as it will have to be if all the noble purposes I have indicated shall ever be accomplished, this enlarged expenditure could only be regarded as auxiliary to the moderate contribution of those who can afford to pay any thing for the schooling of their children. There are two modes of providing this annual expenditure. By raising a permanent fund, or by an annual

tax. Of the two, the former is preferable, as it saves the charges and vexations of annual collections. It will require a permanent fund of \$2,000,000, vested at an interest of six per cent, to supply \$120,000, the lowest annual expenditure contemplated. To raise so large an amount by taxation, in any reasonable time, would be too burthensome to be borne; and some other resource must be looked to. The state has some half a million, which might be appropriated to this purpose; and to what more noble purpose could it be applied? But this would be but a fourth of the sum required. I know the country has been taught to regard the public lands in the Western District, as a resource, in aid of such a fund; but should they ever be made available, which is doubtful, they are already pledged to the occupants, at a price which would not yield more than a twentieth part of the amount required. There is, however, a great and ample resource within our reach, if we shall be wise enough to command it. The public lands, within the organized states and territories, to which the Indian title has already been extinguished, besides the almost interminable domain in the farther west, amount to 200,000,000 of acres. They already yield an average of \$1,200,000 a year to the national treasury; and it is supposed, by judicious management, the annual proceeds of them, may be raised to \$2,000,000. The whole quantity, at fifty cents per acre, which they surely may command, without oppressing the settler upon any part of them, would produce a fund of \$100,000,000. If their proceeds shall be distributed among the several states, Tennessee will be entitled, according to the ratio of her representation in Congress, to \$5,000,000. Happily, Congress has the power of disposing of these lands, subject to no other limitation, than that they shall enure to the equal benefit of all the states. They have been pledged for the payment of the national debt, but the time is at hand when they will be released from this incumbrance. Various opinions are entertained of the future disposition which ought to be made of this great national property. All will admit, that it is already a source of great embarrassment, and some think, of corruption, to Congress. I have had



experience enough of the consequences of the divisions in Congress upon several great and leading points of policy; of the lengths to which the heated and determined spirit of the existing political parties may lead them, to know that, unless some speedy decision shall be adopted in relation to these lands, they are destined to be wholly lost to every great and beneficent purpose. They will be voted away in splendid bribes to particular states and sections of the Union, to answer political views, without regard to the general good. For my own part, from the first moment I came to consider of the uses to which they might be applied, I have held, that a sufficient portion of them ought to be regarded as a sacred deposit in our hands for the support of education in every state of the Union. Phrenzied, perhaps, by the thought, I have imagined that I saw in this fortunate resource for the general diffusion of knowledge, the workings of that secret providence which would seem to have presided over our destiny from the first moment of our existence as a people. And let me cheer the friends of education, as I can, by the intelligence, that a proposition has been favorably received for the application of them to this noble purpose. The advocates of it already approach a majority in Congress, and if Tennessee will but add her united voice, success will be almost certain. But should these calculations fail, the plan of an annual tax still remains to us. Should the public lands be appropriated to this object, until a sufficient fund shall actually be received, the people may be willing to submit to a moderate tax. It is surprising how difficulties vanish when we approach them with a spirit determined to overcome them. To propose to raise \$120,000 annually, may be appalling at a first view, to a people whose whole state tax, for every purpose, has not heretofore exceeded some \$50,000 or 60,000. But leaving out of view the beneficent object of the tax, the proposition loses all its terrors when we come to consider how trifling the charge will be upon each citizen. A tax of twentyfive cents upon each free inhabitant would produce the whole sum required. If we suppose the free population of the state to be composed of families averaging seven members each, the tax will not

exceed \$1 75 to the family; not more than a fourth of the amount usually paid for a year's schooling of one child. Some trifling article of dress in a family, or a few calls at a tavern omitted in the course of the year, makes the saving, and the noble work is accomplished! Any deficiencies occasioned by the charges of collection, or the inability of some to pay, could easily be supplied by the interest of some small permanent fund.

It may stimulate our countrymen to know what the people of other states have submitted to, for the support of education. In Maine, with a population little more than half that of Tennessee, upwards of \$130,000 are annually raised by taxation and paid to support common schools. New Hampshire, with a less population than Maine, levies a yearly tax of \$90,000 for the same object. Vermont, with a population still less, for a like object, raises by general and district taxes, about \$100,000 annually. In Massachusetts, whose population does not much exceed our own, the annual expenditure for public instruction, is more than \$150,000. Connecticut, with but little more than half our population, has a permanent school fund of \$1,800,000. In the year 1828, the expenditure of New York for the support of her schools exceeded \$230,000; and when her system shall be completely organized, the annual expenditure for public instruction cannot fall short of half a million. In several other states a liberal spirit manifests itself, in large annual appropriations for the maintenance of institutions for public instruction of every grade. If this appeal to the practice of sister states, shall have no stirring effect upon the feelings and judgment of the people of Tennessee, let them behold the kings and princes of Europe yielding to their secret destiny and enlightening their subjects. In the kingdom of Prussia, in form, and heretofore in practice, one of the most arbitrary governments of that continent, there are now 20,000 elementary schools established by law, and superintended by officers of the government. *There*, it is not only coming to be a disgrace for a parent to neglect the education of his children, but such neglect is absolutely penal. I put Prussia by way of example only. Education in



Saxony, is even upon a better footing, and most of the states of the German Confederation are vying with each other in the great and glorious undertaking, of making man feel that he is himself. Nor was this part of Europe the first to adopt a popular system of education. It only marks the spread of the spirit of improvement. Even the haughty Turk, who has hitherto regarded all learning as fit only for Christian dogs, is partaking of the spirit of the age, and awakening to the conviction that his power cannot long endure in darkness, in the neighborhood of a region of so much light.

But will the politicians of this country dare to imitate the policy of the other states in this respect, until the people shall have indicated their sentiments? It is to be lamented, that we have no organized system for ascertaining the public will with such precision, that its force and unity can be calculated with certainty, except at the public elections; and these occur at such long intervals, and often depend so much upon personal considerations, that they seldom afford an adequate test of the voice of the people, upon many questions deeply affecting their interest. The civil divisions and jurisdictions of the state are not sufficiently subdivided. In reviewing the story of the Revolution, I remember to have been struck with the superior safety and promptitude with which the people of the eastern states often co-operated in the struggle, over their no less spirited brethren of the middle and southern states. But the difference may be accounted for, when the advantages which their small civic divisions gave to the inhabitants of the East. Each town was a little community within itself; and from the frequent habit of assembling together upon the ordinary business of those small jurisdictions, every question, which the exigencies of the time produced, had the advantage of immediate, free and familiar discussion, and at the same time the sentiments of almost every individual became publicly known. The disaffected were marked and guarded against. But not so with their brethren of other parts of the confederacy. The leaders among them were often compelled to take a decided and important step, without knowing whether they would be

supported by the people. They sometimes hesitated to decide, when they should have been in the midst of action; and the whigs were frequently attacked and betrayed by their nearest neighbors. Mr. Jefferson appears to have placed a high estimate upon the plan of the eastern states in this respect. In a bill reported to the assembly of Virginia, soon after the revolution commenced, he proposed the establishment of a popular system of education, and, as an indispensable incident, to lay off the counties into wardships of five or six miles square. He appears to have contemplated giving to each ward its separate peace officers, militia company, primary school, the care of its own poor, the repair of the public roads within its limits, and the appointment of jurors to attend the courts of the county; thus making each ward a little republic, in which every citizen would be trained to think and act for himself in affairs of government of a minor description, and become qualified the better to sustain himself in the more weighty affairs of the state and general government, upon which he might be called to act or decide. During forty years of that great man's life, he never ceased, upon all suitable occasions, to urge the adoption of this system upon his countrymen; and he may be said to have died with the sentiment, to use his own expressive language, that it would become the "key stone of the arch" which was to sustain the liberties of his country.

I have thus frankly presented those general views, both of the means and the plan of their application, which appear to me to promise the best results, in any attempt to establish a popular system of education in the state.

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*Si quid novisti rectius istis,  
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.*

The cause is worthy, at least, of one great and united effort. If it shall fail, we shall be conscious of having discharged a sacred duty. If it shall triumph, by what calculus shall we be able to estimate the mighty results; the multiplied blessings; the new moral glories which shall crown our society! If earth can afford a scene to interest the spirits of good men and of angels, surely they will look with complacency and delight upon a whole people, en-



lightened, prosperous and happy. And, let not the philanthropist brood over the fancied exclusion of any portion of the human family inhabiting within our borders from the meliorations we contemplate. The very slave, with the progress of mental improvement in his master, finds his comforts increasing around him, his feelings more respected, the relation between him and his master becoming more and more one of reciprocal duties and trusts, until he shall learn to forget his chains!

I feel that I have already trespassed too long upon the indulgence of this assembly, but there are too many grave and interesting considerations connected with my subject, and yet untouched, to be passed over in silence. In all that I have said of the benefits we are to expect from a more general diffusion of knowledge, I have supposed it possible to sustain our present rank in the scale of societies and governments, without any greater degree of attention to education than has hitherto been bestowed. But that may be well questioned. We must advance with our neighbors, or cease to respect ourselves and deteriorate. It rarely happens, that a people have long continued stationary in their condition. They must be, either upon the ascending or the descending scale.

It is incumbent upon the people of this country to sustain themselves in two great positions they at present occupy, of a political nature; to continue competent to self-government in the extent of the powers reserved to them, as a separate sovereignty, and to exercise, in unbroken harmony, their rights and duties as a party to the Federal Union.

We seem to me often to forget, that any one had ever doubted, that our government could last, even when propped by the highest degree of care in enlightening the people. It cannot, surely, be generally known, that there are thousands in the world of distinguished talents, and whose honesty cannot well be doubted, who regard our whole system as an experiment merely, and which, probably, will not last long. Even Washington, the father of his country, appears to have had fearful forebodings of its issue. It is denied by others, that a republic can long en-

dure in any possible condition of society. It is admitted by all, that it is possible to produce such a unity and purity of principle and purpose, as to give a temporary existence to a republic. The jealousy and hatred of foreign oppression, the excitement of revolution, and the spirit of patriotism which usually prevails for a season, after such a working up of the better feelings of our nature, it is said, may do this. But when time shall have abated the force of the impulses thus communicated, it is affirmed that the tendency to faction, anarchy and misrule, is irresistible. These sceptics warn us, that the experience of all past ages is against us, and point to the brief career of Greek and Roman liberty. They tell us, that the experience of the present age, in other quarters of the globe, is against us, and point to the crumbling republics of South America. Thus, we stand, the solitary hope of the world, to refute the theory that all republics are, of necessity, born to a brief existence. I know of no enlightened friend or foe to free institutions, who does not admit that a moral preparation is essential to them. The advocates of free governments count the early fall of the ancient republics as nothing, because the art of printing, the great engine of modern liberty, was unknown to them. They are not discouraged by the fate of recent experiments, either in Europe or America; because, wherever they have failed, it has been from premature attempts among a people not yet emerged from that darkness and ignorance in which it had been the policy of their rulers to keep them enveloped. They look full of hope and confidence to the possibility that a people may become so enlightened, that after the heat of revolution is past, the injuries of former oppression forgotten, and the fear of foreign subjugation shall have subsided, good sense and intelligence enough will remain, to check the restless spirit of individual ambition, and to control the excesses of faction. Thus, the very pivot upon which the opposing theories of government turn, is, the degree of light and knowledge it is possible to communicate to the great body of the people. We cannot conceal from ourselves, that we have arrived at a point in our national existence, which affords many striking analogies to



the condition of the Roman commonwealth, after her great rival had fallen beneath the power and fortune of her arms. We have no fears of foreign violence. The last hopes of the invader have been rent, in the issue of a second war. The outward pressure is withdrawn. The season, which in all other republics has been fruitful in factions and internal discord, approaches, and we are undoubtedly summoned to the last great trial of our system. Nor should we be altogether heedless of the speculations of those profound observers of human affairs, who, from having noticed the very small untoward accidents and conjunctures which have often deranged and set at nought the best and noblest contrivances of man's wisdom, have predicted eternal change and revolution, as the unalterable lot of human society. The extraordinary coincidences and analogies observable in the fortunes of individuals and of states, do, indeed, arrest us at every step in the review of the past, and fill us with melancholy apprehensions of the future. The one, like the other, is observed, from low and humble beginnings, to struggle thro' toil, privation and peril, to the envied distinction of honor, wealth and power, only to lose them in fruition. The goal once reached, one shout of triumph too often marks the close of the thrilling pleasures and excitements of the race; and the victors, buried in sloth, corrupted by enjoyment, or seduced by confidence, yield the course to new men, and new states, to win and lose like those who went before them. But can it be, that man is ever to be the victim of change! that one generation must forever go on in building up, that another may prodigally waste or wickedly destroy! Has the philosopher marked the connexion of cause and effect, and the historian recorded them to no purpose? Shall it be in vain, that we have seen republic after republic rise and prosper for a season, but soon sinking, first into anarchy, then into a withering despotism; their inhabitants roused by the glories of their ancestors, or goaded by oppression, kindling once more into life and liberty, only to be plunged again and again by the same succession of causes, always known, but never regarded, into the former abyss! A temperament, not always sanguine,

sometimes oppresses with the thought, that such may be the too, too early destiny of our own cherished republic. I have seen, I have lately seen, the yellow leaf of autumn in early summer! I have marked the towering oak, the pride of the forest, promising, by the vigor of its growth and the depth of its foundations, to weather the storms of centuries, suddenly, in one unpropitious season, droop and die with all the clustering foliage of spring still hanging thick upon it!

Are there no signs of a tempestuous season to be discerned upon the borders of the political horizon? Are there no symptoms of premature decay to be seen in the action of the body-politic? Do the almost universal rage and thirst for the distinctions and emoluments of office, argue no decay of honest industry? Does the fact, that the greater portion of a thousand public journals is filled with little else than the disgusting details of merely personal and party politics, prove no corruption of the public mind? Does the ultra and uncompromising spirit of the opposing political parties of the times, give no warning of internal discord? Does the proposition, openly advocated by some, for an equal distribution of property, and the attempt to erect a permanent partition wall between what are called the working classes and the rest of society, boldly persisted in by thousands, afford no evidence of the future reign of faction? Is the story of the Gracchi forgotten? Do the schemes of reform, which find their advocates every where, impatient of delay, reckless of consequences, ready to sacrifice present peace, order, union, aye, this globe itself! as some, in their phrensy, have avowed, rather than one jot or tittle of their favorite theories of universal benevolence and justice should fail of accomplishment, give no presage of a coming storm? Shall all these things pass in review before us, and yet shall we slumber?

It is a dangerous, it is a fatal error of the people, to suppose that the foundations of social order are so deeply laid in wisdom and excellence, that they need have no other care, than for their individual comfort and independence; unconscious, or unheeding if conscious, of the



great truth, that it requires the same virtuous adherence to true principles, the same spirit of patriotism, to preserve, that were required to build up the fabric of their political and civil liberties. We delude ourselves when we imagine, that under the most perfect form of government, sustained by the greatest possible degree of intelligence among the people, we are destined, in our career, to be forever exempt from violent fermentations of the public mind, from popular commotion, or even from occasional bloodshed. The history of man in all ages forbids the delusive hope. The indulgence of the finest and noblest feelings of our nature are dangerous, in the highest excitements of which they are susceptible. The love of liberty; Heaven-prescribed charity; the philanthropy which embraces the human family, have, each in their turn, when irritated by opposition and freed from the guidance of reason, added largely to the sum of human suffering. All that human foresight can accomplish; all that human wisdom can devise, can do no more than to temper those inevitable excesses, and still to preserve the elements of order and government in the periods of their greatest effervescence.

But let us turn from the contemplation of dangers, which I fear will ever be regarded as remote, until they shall overwhelm us with their presence, to the certainties which stare us in the face. There is one great truth, depending upon no speculation, no dream of the hypochondriac's brain, which I would that I could raise my voice to the compass of the whole people in proclaiming. It is, that whatever name or form a government may assume or preserve, the administration of it will, in its spirit and bearing, be the exact type of the people. A government upon paper is one thing; in practice it is another and quite a different thing. Whatever vice or folly, corruption or selfishness, ignorance or intelligence, order or licentiousness may be found among the people, will be faithfully copied and reflected back upon them, by their representatives and public functionaries. If individual profit and indulgence, to the neglect of all public duties and interests, shall ever become the exclusive, low and

mercenary rule of conduct in the great body of society, the same narrow measure of selfish personal views must taint the stream which flows from so polluted a fountain. Thus, though we may bear the proud title of freedom upon the external frame of our laws and policy, deluded by the name, we may become the dupes of ambitious demagogues; the slaves of republican despots. While the people may flatter themselves with the idea that they are, of right, the sole depositaries of political power, they become, in fact, the mere tools of popular leaders. Factions, in turn, must hold the reins of sovereignty, whenever the people shall be prepared to clamor in the train of personal favorites, without due regard to the principles of their public conduct. Such is the low destiny which awaits us, with all our imposing forms of freedom, when ignorance and selfishness shall become the predominant features of our society. Let us reverse the picture, and fix our attention for a moment upon the effects of virtue and intelligence in moulding the character of a government. If republics contract the vices and worst characteristics of a monarchy, in the absence of a due diffusion of intelligence, on the other hand, such is the magic influence of light and knowledge, that despotisms in form, assume the mild aspect of republics, under their sway. Europe, at this moment, affords the most interesting illustrations of these truths. Behold that continent checkered all over with kingdoms, principalities and states, with inhabitants descended from the same original stock, steadily enlarging the boundaries of their privileges, and enjoying a degree of liberty and prosperity, exactly proportioned to the advance of knowledge among themselves! Its still widening circles have embraced class after class, until the last and lowest begins to rejoice in its regenerating influences. A breeze scarcely blows from East to West, but it wafts to us tidings of some new lodgment effected by the friends of liberty in the old and tottering ramparts of political oppression. The people are up and doing. Link after link of their ancient fetters is broken, and inheritable power, the last strong bar of their political prison house, vibrates sensibly, and must break, under the reiterated assaults of

public opinion. The impulse is from the school boy! Public instruction is the new and potent battery, the moral gunpowder, which the liberals of Europe have brought to operate upon their oppressors. Such has been the tremendous energy of this agent, that another century is not likely to know a King or Prince in all that seat of royal splendor. But when Europe shall, in truth, be free, it remains to be seen, whether the aliment which nourished their young liberties into life, shall continue to be supplied, or fatally withheld. Yet another century may find its corrupted inhabitants crouching once more beneath an iron sceptre, or, preserving the image of freedom, becoming the slaves of licentious demagogues. All reforms of government, therefore, must commence with the people, by enlightening them. Knowledge is the great corrector of abuses. If we would reform the abuses of our own government, effectively, we must begin at home, by enlightening, purifying and elevating the standard of public feeling and judgment. Such a course would be worth more than all the other schemes for the regeneration and improvement of the country, of which the times are so prolific. If you would have good roads and canals, enlighten the people. If you would really cherish domestic industry, enlighten the people. If you would preserve the Union, enlighten the people. To those whose lot it may be to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, I would say, give your mite to this great cause, that your children may have a step to rise upon; and the inheritance of freedom is wealth to every citizen. To the rich I would say, give a tythe of all your annual gains, of all you have if it be necessary, as the best security for the enjoyment of the remainder, and the safest means of transmitting it to posterity. It will be the most fortunate investment of your lives. It will repay more than the usurer's interest; for remember, that the tenure by which every thing is held in this country, is the public will. To keep it steady, pure and just, it must be enlightened.

I trust I am animated, on this occasion, by a higher purpose than to sustain any political party of the country, but I cannot forbear to invoke the zealous co-operation of



that class of politicians among us who call themselves *state right* men, in laying the foundations, in the only manner possible of that real respectability, weight and authority of state institutions and powers which constitute the essence of their political creed. It is idle to declaim eternally about state rights, if we continue to neglect every efficient means of giving value and currency to them; and what so well calculated to give a proper sense of the propriety of sustaining the reserved powers of the states in unimpaired vigor, as the effective and beneficent exercise of the right of providing for the general diffusion of knowledge among the people! Let the advocates of state rights imitate the great founders of their doctrines, the Virginians, in placing the institutions of learning upon such a footing as will secure a succession of upright, firm and able champions of their faith in the public councils of the country. Upon those likewise I would call, who hold that it is of equal importance to the safe and harmonious action of our system, that a just equilibrium of power and influence should be maintained between the states themselves. Who can be ignorant, at this day, that the power and respectability of a people depend more upon their intelligence and moral energy, than upon mere numerical strength? The federal constitution will, in vain, have provided a fair and just distribution of power among the several states in Congress, unless talents shall accompany representation. The whole history of the government shews that the due weight or ascendancy of a state depends more upon the ability than the number of its members. A feeble delegation always yield themselves up to the guidance and control of the more gifted members of other states; a condition of things neither safe nor honorable to the state thus left destitute of any actual support to its interests. Much as I respect and revere the character and talents of many statesmen of other sections of the Union, I would neither make war nor peace; amend, enlarge or limit the Constitution by construction; advocate or oppose the tariff; be for or against internal improvements, because the standing oracles in politics of other states proclaimed the necessity of the one course or the

other. I would qualify our statesmen and people, by a home education, to decide for themselves upon every measure of public interest and policy.

But of all the political sectaries of the day, those who maintain that the people of a state have a right to nullify an act of Congress, upon constitutional grounds, are the most concerned to aid efficiently in the establishment of a system of public instruction; and of such a system too, as shall lay the foundation of sound views of constitutional construction and learning over the whole country. Let them do this, and their country will decree them its greatest benefactors. But let me not be understood as levelling a cold sarcasm against a people driven almost to madness by their exhausted resources and the taunts of their enemies. I can pardon much to a noble but wounded spirit.

There is another most respectable and influential class, not of politicians, but of their opposites, from whom, may we not hope for a cordial and active support in the great design of supplying the bread of intellectual life to the rising generation? I allude to the clergy of every denomination, but more particularly to those of the Protestant Churches. If I may venture a remark upon the conduct of the functionaries of our holy religion, I would express my astonishment, that they could ever forget by whom, and by what means under Heaven, that darkness was dispelled, and those spiritual chains were loosed, which once held the Christian world in gross delusion; that the pulpit should ever cease to hold up the Bible itself, in its pure English dress, as the work of that so much neglected University learning. If I were called upon to form a homily for all the churches of the land, I would include in it an humble petition to the great Giver of every good and perfect gift, graciously to dispose the hearts of the people to a right perception of the value of education.

But it is to the youth of the rising generation, that we must chiefly look for that support which the interest at stake so loudly demands. It is to those who may yet be taught, that their first duty is to their country; it is to the young and ardent and virtuous youth, who are yet un-



contaminated with the pursuit of office, uncorrupted by the intrigues, and uncontrolled by the political connexions of the day, that we can most safely look for those generous personal sacrifices, the disinterestedness and the energy, without which, hope were vain! We have nothing to expect, but much to fear, from that brood engendered by the besetting sin of the times, the thirst for office; from those who seek to win the public favor, that they may make private spoil of public interests; who would make a job of the highest offices of their country. And least of all, have we any thing to expect from that impudent assurance, which is ready to undertake every thing, but is able to perform nothing. I have heard it avowed in private circles, that there is no honesty in politics; and that he is a dull fellow, after all, who, having the address to gain the public confidence, and the ability to turn it to account, does not make his own fortune. A more gross and wicked libel upon human nature; a more dangerous scepticism; a more alarming infidelity to the essential principles of our government, never was avowed. Would my young countrymen permit me to point them to a higher path to fame, and withal a surer road to fortune, I would say to them, swear, like Hannibal, upon the altar of your country, that you will never receive office but when freely offered; nay, rather abjure office forever, than accept it on terms a freeman should blush to yield to. There are virgin fields before you, in which more enduring honors, more substantial rewards await the determined reaper, than office sought can ever give. Go forth, the missionaries of light and knowledge! Preach a crusade against ignorance; and, whether in the private walks of life, or in the senate of your country, let the flashes of your indignation blast those creatures of corruption, who flatter ignorance that they may live by it. Go! a determined Spartan band; throw yourselves in the breach, cheering and being cheered by mutual examples of fortitude, resolution and disinterestedness; content to seek glory, where alone she sits enshrined, in the hearts of the good and the wise. Our free institutions are held up as a lamp to light the path of nations; as a model fit to reform



the world by! Shall they fall by your neglect? It is your country that asks your aid. Will you be false to her? It is Tennessee that feels her honor wounded! She offers to her sons the soil of Egypt; the sky of Italy! She asks in return, that they will embellish her with their arts; illustrate her name by Science, and elevate her to an equal rank with her sisters; but chiefly, she unites with them, in imploring you to cultivate and guard the "Hesperian fruit," Liberty!

